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# Why a Foreign Relations Chairman Speaks Out

Sen. J. William Fulbright (D-Ark.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has been outspoken recently, as always, on American foreign policy, often at variance with the expressed or implied views of the Democratic administration. The following is a tape-recorded interview with the Senator by Washington Post Staff Writer Chalmers M. Roberts.

**ROBERTS:** Senator, you recently made a speech about American intervention in the Dominican Republic which produced a lot of criticism. Some said your timing was bad. One critic said the speech was "a personal proclamation of a personal foreign policy." An editorial called it a "grossly irresponsible attack on the Administration." And it was reported that President Johnson's reaction was that the speech would "embarrass the future course of United States diplomacy in the Dominican Republic."

Those are strong words to throw at the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. What do you think of such criticism?

Fulbright: I think it's quite unusual that anyone should question the right and the duty of a member of the Senate to express his views about an incident of great importance. I have always assumed that a member of the Senate has the responsibility to tell the truth as he sees it. I don't pretend our judgments are infallible, but it is one of the functions of a member of the Senate to raise these questions for public discussion, and out of this a sound foreign policy may be developed. If I am wrong, this still would clarify the issues involved in this case.

The purpose of this was not in any way to affect what's happened in the Dominican Republic. Obviously, it's much after the event. Its real purpose was to influence the course of events in future revolutions that are inevitable, I think, in Latin America, because it is in a process of change.

When I use the word revolution, I don't necessarily mean a violent one, but changes in their social structure, and I think the very basis of the Alliance for Progress is an assumption that changes in their social and economic structure are necessary—their land tenure, taxes and so on. I've been a little surprised that they've questioned the propriety of a Senator speaking out on these

## Some Extra Status

**Q.** SENATOR, I think that the criticism runs not to a Senator speaking out but to you speaking out because you are the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Perhaps it would be useful to discuss that role for a minute. Some names come to mind: Borah, Vandenberg, Connally, George, Henry Cabot Lodge Sr. all had great influence on American foreign policy one way or another.

In each of these cases, the Senator who was the chairman of the committee had some extra status. Now, as America's role in the world has increased, this status has increased. Do you draw any distinction between your right to speak as you just indicated as a Senator, and your role as chairman of this particular committee?

A. Well, it's my impression that the men you mention as my predecessors as chairman—take Lodge, for example, or Borah—often spoke out very vigorously in dissent to the current policy of the time; and Vandenberg exercised a great deal of influence, certainly much more than I or any other person recently.

I think there are several reasons for that. One, he individually was a powerful personality. In addition to that, the party division at that time was very close, and Vandenberg, by virtue of that fact, could exercise a decisive influence on the course of events in the Senate. Without his cooperation, the Administration would have been in great difficulty, because during the period of his chairmanship his party had numerical control of the Senate and he had a special position of power. He complained that he wanted to "be in on the takeoffs as well as the crash landings," and he was consulted to a much greater extent than I've ever been consulted in advance of actions taken.

During part of his tenure, at least, he could decisively influence the course of the action of the Senate versus the Administration. I cannot do that, because the President at this time is clearly the dominant personality in our Government, and as this session has proved, he can get what he wants out of Congress with or without my support.

text. All I was trying to do in this

case, as I have in others, was to give the Senate and the country the benefit of my best judgment on a matter of policy. And I also want to say that in this case, as in some of the other cases that have been mentioned, it was after the fact. I had no notice of what was going to happen in the Dominican Republic. The only way I could comment on it was after the fact.

## A Rare Rapprochement

**Q.** THAT'S IN some contrast to your relationship with President Kennedy before the Bay of Pigs affair, where you were called in and did have a chance to make known your opinion in advance.

A. That was a very unusual specific instance in which purely by chance I happened to be invited to go with him on a weekend at Easter. He didn't invite me for that purpose; he happened to be going the same place I was, and he said come along.

**Q.** You seized on the opportunity?

A. I seized upon the opportunity to present him with a memorandum and my advice. He didn't solicit it and didn't expect it, but he got it, and that's the way that developed.

He did call me in. That is almost unique; I think it was the only instance in which, prior to the event, I was thoroughly aware of what was up and had an opportunity to express my opinion.

In contrast, there was the Dominican case. We and other members of Congress were advised, at about the time the Marines were being landed, that they were being landed for the purpose of saving American lives. Now, no one would object to landing some Marines to save American lives, assuming, of course, that the conditions were as described.

I've been asked: Why didn't you object then? Why, I didn't know anything about the events that were actually taking place other than what we were told at that meeting. Now we have had this review (of the Dominican case in the Foreign Relations Committee). I don't quite see why it is considered unusual to discuss an event of this significance with a view to influencing the attitude of our policy makers in future events of a similar nature which are very likely to take place.

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